

**Testimony of Sheriff Patrick D. McGowan
Sheriff of Hennepin County, Minnesota**

**Representing the
NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION**

***The National Training Program: Is Anti-Terrorism Training
for First Responders Efficient and Effective?***

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**Before the
United States House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security**

**Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness,
Science, and Technology
&
Subcommittee on Management, Integration, and Oversight**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to appear before this distinguished panel to present to you an overview of the National Sheriffs' Association's contributions to our nation's homeland security.

The National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) believes that the Office of Sheriff is one of our nation's most vital institutions. Sheriffs throughout the country interact with citizens and a wide variety of other agencies, at many levels. Their influence and impact upon the country cannot be understated.

There are 3,087 sheriffs across the country representing both rural and urban jurisdictions. Many of them have influence over hundreds of square miles, while others serve in very densely populated cities.

The National Sheriffs' Association is a non-profit organization, chartered in 1940. Since its inception, the organization has consistently dedicated itself to raising the level of professionalism among sheriffs, their deputies, and others in the field of criminal justice and public safety so that they may perform their jobs in the best possible manner, in service to the people of their communities.

In support of that mission, NSA provides sheriffs and other criminal justice practitioners with resources, technical assistance, information, and opportunities for professional development. Through its annual conferences, NSA also provides valuable opportunities for networking and interacting with our fellow criminal justice professionals. The NSA is committed to the quest of continually enhancing the services it provides to sheriffs, law enforcement personnel, and the public safety community.

In 1999, the NSA using funds provided by the US Department of Homeland Security, Office for Domestic Preparedness initiated an Executive Level WMD event preparedness, prevention, and response training program. In the years that followed, the success of this initial course led to the development of additional programs: Community Partnership Training, Jail Evacuation Training, and First Responder Training were each conceived and designed to fill gaps in our nation's preparedness training.

Since that time, NSA and ODP have developed a close working relationship to deliver training to our Nation's first responder community. NSA firmly believes that ODP's training program is making significant inroads into the training needs of the first responder community, particularly the sheriffs. We are pleased with the progress that ODP has made in developing appropriate courses and greatly appreciate the outreach that ODP has undertaken to ensure that our Nation's sheriffs receive the training they require to prevent terrorist activities and protecting our country.

Close, open, and creative communication between ODP and the NSA has led to the development of programs that are well suited to the challenges facing our country. With collaboration from ODP, NSA has been able to ensure that as the nature of the threats evolve and change, the training offered by NSA evolves as well, allowing sheriffs the opportunity to meet those new challenges head on.

The support of the federal government through the ODP has allowed the NSA to maintain its position at the forefront of the war on terror. Sheriffs across the country have been able to train their command staff, a variety of first responders, and members of their local community for

several years. As each community and its responders refine their preparedness skills and their response capabilities, our country becomes stronger.

There is more to be done, and the National Sheriffs' Association is more than ready to take up the challenge!

BACKGROUND

The National Sheriffs' Association has taken a leading role in the nation's fight against terrorism. The Homeland Security and Weapons of Mass Destruction programs at NSA have been designed to respond flexibly to the needs of jurisdictions and communities across the country.

The programs developed by the National Sheriffs' Association were developed in response to the many requests from sheriffs across the nation. The NSA recognized that if specific sectors of the population were adequately prepared, then a coordinated and mutually supportive response would likely occur, resulting in a more effective and efficient outcome.

Each program addresses a critically important sector and dramatically enhances the preparedness of citizens and emergency responders, should a terrorist event occur in their community, or in a nearby community.

Whether NSA conducts a course in a large urban area, or in a small rural community, participants find that the information and training that they receive is both timely and relevant to their circumstances. In an ever-changing world, we constantly need to provide new information, raise new questions, and address unique circumstances, if we are truly going to prepare the Nation.

The NSA's Homeland Security and WMD training initiatives began in April 1999 after the association received a \$250,000 grant to develop an Executive Level Training Curriculum for Sheriffs, and to conduct pilot that training in five locations.

In May 2000, the Association received another \$600,000 award to conduct an additional 14 training programs.

In September 2001, \$700,000 was awarded for the continuation of this project through October 2002, including funds to conduct an additional 10 WMD Incident Risk and Crisis Communication training sessions.

In October 2002, \$2 million was awarded, extending the project through September 2003.

In January 2003, the project scope was expanded to include 3 new training programs:

- (1) Jail Evacuation Planning Program, which initially conducted 4 pilot projects. Predicated on the success of these pilot programs, NSA started delivering regular training in May 2004;
- (2) Community Partnerships & Awareness Program, which also conducted 4 pilot projects and began offering trainings in May 2004.

(3) First Responder: Train-the-Trainer Program, which is currently in the course development stage, with trainings anticipated to begin in June 2005.

In October 2003, NSA \$2 million was awarded to continue the project through September 2004. And In October 2004, \$3 million was awarded for continuation of the WMD training programs through September 2005.

Introduction to NSA Homeland Security Training Program Initiatives

NSA training has been developed with the practical needs of law enforcement and first responder agencies and personnel in mind. Focus groups, composed of individuals invited to participate, according to their knowledge and expertise, provided initial guidance for course structure and content.

Focus group input guided the NSA as it developed a framework for each course, and then provided a context for its selection of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs). The SME team was then tasked with the development of course content and delivery strategies.

The NSA was often fortunate to obtain the services of SMEs, who are national and international leaders in their fields. And because of the expertise of these individuals, NSA has been able to provide cutting edge, up-to-the-minute information in such areas as Explosives and Booby Traps (*First Responder Course*) and NIMS (*First Responder*, *Jail Evacuation*, and *Managing the Event – A Leadership Guide for All-Hazard Events*) as a direct result of the caliber of SME retained by the NSA.

Upon completion, each course draft was presented in a series of pilot programs, which were utilized to fine-tune program material and delivery. The programs were then released, and the NSA began delivering training to Sheriffs' jurisdictions across the country began.

NSA training programs have been specifically designed to provide up-to-date information to participants. They demand participation in a range of activities, bringing this new information to life, as scenarios and table-top exercises tailored for the host jurisdiction are undertaken in both cooperative groups and individual settings.

Cooperative group activities encourage immediate partnering between agencies, and foster long-term networking within the jurisdiction. Activities designed for the individual demand that each participant consider the current status of their agency. Actions necessary to improve the prevention and response capabilities of the agency are then determined, laying the foundation for focused action once participants return to their agencies and communities.

As the scope and direction of national security initiatives changes, the NSA has been quick to respond. The original *WMD Executive Course* for example, which focused on WMD awareness, has been completely updated, and now focuses on *Managing the Event – A Leadership Guide for All-Hazard Events*. This new course focuses more upon prevention and preparedness, echoing the requirements of HSPD #8.

The Community Partnerships program has gradually reshaped itself to help launch Neighborhood Watch and Citizen Corps programs in communities where these initiatives have not yet been implemented.

Features of the NSA Homeland Security Initiatives Training Programs

The constituency of the National Sheriffs' Association provides a single platform from which training and information initiatives may be launched across the country, penetrating every state, and almost all jurisdictions. The office of Sheriff serves as a central agency within each jurisdiction that is able to marshal the resources of other law enforcement and responding agencies, as well as the resources and energies of the citizens.

NSA programs have been developed to have the maximum impact possible at both local and national levels.

Thus, the *WMD Executive Program* (now *Managing the Event – A Leadership Guide for All-Hazard Events*) was developed first, in order to prepare Sheriffs, their command staff, and executives of other agencies for a WMD or all-hazard event. This broad-based program fosters organization at a local, jurisdictional level. It also provides each jurisdiction's leaders with the necessary skills and knowledge to move their community's prevention and response programs forward in a way that reflects current federal government initiatives (e.g. NIMS implementation).

Armed with new information, our nation's sheriffs soon began asking for additional and specialized training which would include the handling of jail inmates, and citizen awareness.

Managing the Event – A Leadership Guide for All-Hazard Events provides a solid foundation for specialized training, designed for specific enforcement and community sectors. The *Jail Evacuation* program, *Community Partnerships* program, and the *First Responders* program were the result.

Each focused upon a sector of the overall national response plan that had thus far been ignored or poorly served. Each was designed to mobilize its target audience, leading to new levels of preparedness, new awareness directed towards prevention, and a new capacity for effective and efficient response in the event of an incident.

The NSA now provides four training programs for the nation's Sheriffs. These programs are:

1. Managing the Incident - A Leadership Guide to All-Hazard Events
2. Community Partnerships and Awareness
3. Jail Evacuation
4. First Responder Train-the-Trainer

1. Managing the Incident - A Leadership Guide to All-Hazard Events

"I am enthusiastic about this program. Sheriff Oxley of Monmouth County, NJ should be commended for taking a proactive approach on this important initiative," said Sheriff Ferrell.

"The bottom line is cooperation and mutual aid which we will talk about all day. One person or one agency can't do it all. Sheriff Oxley saw the value and importance up front."

The National Sheriffs' Association's *WMD Executive Course* was designed to prepare Sheriffs to plan, equip and train their agencies to respond effectively to a terrorist incident. In the period between 1999 and 2003, the training was delivered to over 6,000 Sheriffs and other members of the emergency response community, in 38 states.

IN 2004, the NSA and ODP agreed to completely revise the program. The result was *Managing the Event – A Leadership Guide for All-Hazard Events*. Four pilots of the new program have been delivered (training 225 participants), and the course is now scheduled for ODP review in July 2005.

Feedback on the new course has been extremely positive, and numerous demands for this new course are already being received by the NSA office.

Managing the Incident - A Leadership Guide to All-Hazard Events, focuses upon the needs of law enforcement executive staff. In 2004, an advisory group composed of Sheriffs from large and small jurisdictions convened in order to identify shortcomings in existing WMD courses. The course which evolved from this beginning took as its primary objective the training of law enforcement executives to recognize and effectively deal with terrorist and all-hazard events.

The program is unique. It provides opportunity for law enforcement executives to examine and then modify their jurisdiction's emergency plan in the context of up-to-date information across a wide range of crucial subjects.

The program includes instruction and activity-based learning whereby:

- Participants will receive an update on the latest WMD information. This topic is ever-changing, and correct and timely information is crucial to effective planning and response.
- It is important, should a terrorist or all-hazard event occur, each responding agency knows its duties, responsibilities, and limitations. The program allows executives to identify, cultivate, and document roles and responsibilities within their agencies, and in cooperation and coordination with other agencies, thus enhancing the efficiency of response.
- Executives identify threats, vulnerabilities and resources within their own jurisdictions. The extent to which an agency has completed this task is the extent to which a successful resolution of an all-hazard or terrorist event may be obtained.
- Communications, including media issues, are carefully studied by participants. Such subjects as, responding to the media, Public Information Officer (PIO) hiring and training, and communications with citizens, are introduced. Various activities allow participants to actively experience the demands of this element of an overall response, allowing them to better develop a response plan suitable for their jurisdiction's requirements.
- Gathering, analyzing and sharing information with the proper agencies is a vital component to the success of our nation's ongoing war on terrorism. *Managing the Incident - A Leadership Guide to All-Hazard Events* provides information on these

processes, and it links law enforcement executives to the nation's network of intelligence agencies.

- A regularly updated overview of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) as it applies to law enforcement executives responding to terrorist acts and all-hazards events is provided. Funding options are also discussed, making it possible for law enforcement executives to build upon plans with additional training, and crucial equipment.

2. Community Partnerships and Awareness Training

“This was very informative with regards to the ability of private citizens to actually assist with a WMD or just an area wide emergency.”

The NSA recognized that, should an all-hazard or terrorist incident occur in a community, local first responders and local citizens will have to deal with the situation themselves. Their level of preparation will dictate the effectiveness of the initial response. Later, the degree to which citizens and responding agencies are able to mutually support one another will shape the successful outcome of an event.

The NSA Community Partnerships and Awareness Training develops a dynamic partnership between citizens and responding agencies. The program also serves to initiate Neighborhood Watch programs in communities where the program may not have been activate. Other programs, such as Citizen Corps, VIPS, and CERT, are also introduced as important factors in each community's overall preparedness.

Since its first pilots were completed late in 2003, the course has trained almost 1,700 participants from jurisdictions across the nation.

Unique elements of the program include:

- Law enforcement agencies are trained to independently continue this training in their jurisdictions, at future community meetings.
- Increased community awareness of the risks and hazards posed by Weapons of Mass Destruction. Training intended to provide sufficient information for citizens to tentatively identify agent types, and to respond accordingly, is also provided.
- Building of a Community Resources Database (CRD) is initiated. The CRD may be used as a supplement to existing local emergency databases, or which may serve as the primary community resource or citizen database, and may be utilized in the event of a terrorist attack.
- Initiation of collaborative partnerships that can be activated in times of crisis.
- Development of a community mobilization plan, to be activated in an emergency situation.
- Practical experience of response options possible during an emergency situation via a table-top exercise.

- Establishment of an on-going planning and training processes for community preparedness.
- All course attendees receive an interactive *Weapons of Mass Destruction* CD, which may be referenced in order to broaden their knowledge, and which may be used at future community meetings.
- The program initiates a community-wide Neighborhood Watch program, which now contains anti-terrorism training as well as anti-crime elements, should this program not exist already within the community.

The results of this program have been striking. Personnel from a variety of law enforcement and response agencies work in cooperation with citizens representing a broad cross-section of the community – from civic and business leaders, to teachers and senior citizens, to representatives of the faith community.

Arising from these new partnerships were hazards and resources previously unrecognized by the Sheriff's office or other response agencies. During one program, for example, citizens expressed their concern over a large dam, situated in an adjoining state that would devastate their community if ruptured. The Sheriff's office and other responding agencies were thus able to add this hazard to their list for immediate and close attention.

At another training, a clergyman revealed that, situated below his church, there was a fully equipped fall-out shelter, which he was currently using for storage. The clergyman, it was discovered, was the only person aware of this facility, which had been constructed during the Cold War, and then forgotten. He offered the facility to the Sheriff for use as a Command Post, should it ever be required.

3. Jail Evacuation

“Although we routinely work on evacuation plans for natural disasters, we have done virtually nothing in the areas covered by this class. It has opened my eyes to a whole new field of concern; we need to take extensive preparatory measures.”

The NSA Jail Evacuation Course has been designed to address the needs of small and large jails in rural and urban jurisdictions, preparing them to evacuate in the event of a terrorist attack or an all-hazards event. The specific challenges posed by jail evacuation have attracted the attention of DHS, ODP and the nation's Sheriffs.

Since 2003, when pilots for the program were first delivered, 2,274 participants from jurisdictions in all regions of the country have received training. 40 programs have been conducted over the past 13 months. 62 jurisdictions, 241 counties, as well as officials from prisons, private detention facilities, and Police Departments, Fire & Rescue and Emergency managers have attended. The course has also been hosted by the Departments of Corrections in two states. 32 more programs are scheduled prior to Thanksgiving 2005.

When examining the NSA Jail Evacuation program, it should be noted that:

- This program started due to the numerous requests from sheriffs who had recognized the need to develop plans for evacuating inmates, staff, visitors, etc. from their jails in the event of an all-hazards event, or a direct attack on the facility, or in the event that the jail is close to a primary terrorist target.
- Jails meet or exceed terrorist target criteria - They contain high concentrations of people, and they are the most expensive government buildings to construct. An attack or all-hazard event could kill or injure many individuals, and destroy or render uninhabitable a crucial facility.
- In the event of uncontrolled mass escape or release, dangerous inmates may be freed to again prey upon a vulnerable civilian population. A properly prepared jail evacuation plan, developed as attendees take part in the program, minimizes these effects.
- Most inmates currently housed in jails are of a pre-trial status, and therefore presumed innocent. Jails without an evacuation plan are vulnerable to legal processes which may result in massive liabilities. In the past, facilities not having planned and practiced for fires have lost large lawsuits. The outcome of this course is that attendees are able to develop an evacuation plan appropriate for the unique requirements of their own facility.
- Captured terrorists are often detained in local jails. This taxes existing (and already strained) resources, and also increases the likelihood that the facility itself may become a target for an attack.
- The program has also provided the first WMD and all-hazard planning and information material to be obtained by some jurisdictions and counties.

Jails, and the specific challenges that evacuation of a jail presents both jail administrators and the general community, have received little attention. Currently, the NSA Jail Evacuation program is unique, providing essential training that prepares jail personnel to respond to a hazardous event. The safety and well-being of each community and its citizens are maximized by the training and planning guidelines provided by the program.

4. First Responder

“This was one of the best classes I’ve attended in a long time.”

The NSA First Responder Program focuses on the actions required in the initial phase of a response - the crucial fifteen to thirty minutes that elapses between occurrence of the event, and response by incoming emergency teams. With an emphasis on safety and teamwork, participants learn that actions taken in the first moments of a CBRNE incident set the stage for success.

The NSA First Responder program recently completed its third and final pilot. A total of 79 participants from across the country, representing law enforcement personnel as well as such agencies as Fire Departments and the military, received training as the pilot programs were delivered.

News of the effectiveness and relevance of this program has begun to spread by word of mouth, and the NSA office is currently receiving inquiries from a variety of federal and state agencies, as well as from NSA members. A waiting list is currently filling, as the program awaits final ODP review. Inquiring agencies include the US Secret Service, TSA (Transportation Safety Admin), FBI, the US Navy, US Marines, US Air Force, and an international inquiry from Canada's Chatham Kent Police Service (Ontario), and the Toronto Police Service Intelligence Support.

This course was specifically designed to rapidly and efficiently train a large number of people across the country. Course instruction and table-top exercises coupled with practical exercise, prepare participants to train the members of their own agency to:

- Perform an assessment of the building and perimeter of the building.
- Focus on potential facility security vulnerabilities, and prepare a documented pre-planned response. (CIRP mission folder is placed on CD for emergency use.)
- Safely approach an incident, take command, and anticipate the needs of a rapidly escalating Hazmat incident using Unified Command.
- Set perimeters, set isolation zones, communicate safe routes of travel to other responders, protect evidence, apprehend suspects, and begin protective actions and plan for rescue, mass decontamination, and staging areas.
- Identify booby traps, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), & secondary devices.
- Implement searches for explosive devices.
- Identify and protect evidence for use in prosecutions.
- Utilize NIMS-recommended strategies to respond to an all-hazard or terrorist event. Transfer control from one level of command to the next, up to and including a federal response. The course reviews IC100, IC200 (encouraging participants to complete online exams upon return to their agency), and required documentation of the incident at each level of command.
- Respond to an all hazards incident, stressing areas of crowd control, perimeters, and evacuations.
- Identify resources available through mutual aid, state and federal agencies.
- Take care of themselves by teaching stress inoculation and reduction, which is a factor that may affect responders during and/or after a stressful situation or event.
- Provide a resource disk with over 600 resource documents, publications, websites, and book titles for the trainer.

Lessons Learned

The NSA has learned that a variety of training approaches maximize the ability of any community or agency to respond with efficiency and effectiveness to an all-hazard event: The lessons learned may be applied by a specific training agency, or they may be considered by those responsible for the National Training Program. Lessons learned by the NSA include

1. Train trainers – If the training offered by an organization prepares participants to train members of their community or agency, then the effect of the training provided is compounded.
2. Develop courses that involve participants from a variety of agencies in activities specific to their own community's unique circumstances. The networking that develops from such experiences can take on a life of its own, greatly enhancing the partnerships required for effective prevention and response.
3. Specifically target training to address the needs of specific groups within law enforcement agencies, response agencies, and within the general community.
4. Use membership organizations as major training partners. These organizations are able to readily communicate with their constituents across the nation. This provision allows for efficient notification of program availability, and it also permits a smooth vehicle for participant feedback. The effectiveness of the NSA's communication machine provides a model for this approach.
5. Develop programs using a consultative approach – Initial development should be characterized by focus groups composed of ultimate participant representatives. This maximizes the ability of course developers to provide meaningful and relevant training.
6. Utilize subject matter experts well-versed in their fields. Search out leaders and innovators currently working in and contributing to their discipline. This ensures cutting edge and up-to-date content.
7. Incorporate jurisdiction/agency-specific activities and exercises – This immediately enhances prevention and response capability, and contributes long-term to the community's development of a viable and effective response plan.

Challenges

The National Sheriffs' Association recognizes the following challenges in future years. These include:

1. Ensuring that sufficient federal funding is continued, thereby allowing training of law enforcement agencies, response agencies, and the training of citizens across the nation, to continue uninterrupted.

2. Reflect the current federal governments drive to develop methods and approaches that encourage agencies to train, plan and work together. The NSA will continue to explore means by which it might continue to foster combined NSA training of such agencies as the Secret Service and military with law enforcement personnel.
3. Maintaining and strengthening the partnership between the Department of Homeland Security and the Office of Domestic Preparedness, and the National Sheriffs' Association. To date, this partnership has led to the development and implementation of crucial training in jurisdictions across the country, with the end result being communities today are better prepared to prevent or respond to an all-hazards event or a terrorist attack.

Conclusion

The National Sheriffs' Association has taken a lead role in providing training for its own member sheriffs across the country. However, sheriffs' offices have served as a center from which NSA programs have been delivered to a wider audience consisting of other (local, state, and federal) law enforcement agencies, other first responder agencies (such as fire departments and EMS Services), state and federal agencies, the military, and our civilian population.

NSA's Weapons of Mass Destruction Committee in cooperation with the NSA Training Division have identified specific flaws in the nation's existing training infrastructure. Where train-the-trainer was not appropriate, the NSA's focus upon establishment of long-term projects directed towards better preparing agencies and communities to respond to an all-hazard event provided a powerful model for future course development.

The effectiveness of NSA training initiatives to date can be clearly seen in course evaluation data. A further demonstration of the relevance of NSA training programs may be verified in the current demand for training programs being delivered across the country. The level of interest shown by agencies and organizations both within the United States, and from the international community, furthers confirms our success.

WITNESS CONTACT INFORMATION:

Sheriff Patrick D. McGowan
350 South Fifth Street
Room 6, Courthouse
Minneapolis, MN 55415-1316
Phone: (612) 348-3740
Fax: (612) 348-4208
Patrick.mcgowan@co.hennepin.mn.us

SECONDARY CONTACT INFORMATION

Eric L. Schultz, Jr.
National Sheriffs' Association
1450 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone: (703) 838-5327
Fax: (703) 683-6541
eschultz@sheriffs.org